



United States Army Europe Retiree Bulletin



VOLUME XIX

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ATTN: AEUPE-PSSD-PAD-RSO, Unit 29058, APO AE 09081

HQ, 1st PERSONNEL COMMAND
ATTN: AEUPE-PSSD-PAD-RSO
UNIT 29058
APO AE 09081

OFFICIAL BUSINESS

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Telephone: DSN 379-6080 or CIV 06202-80-6080

E-mail: usareur-rso@hq.1perscom.army.mil

Website: <http://www.1perscom.army.mil/usareur.retirement.services>

Headquarters, United States Army, Europe, and Seventh Army approved use of funds for printing this publication on 26 May 1987. Its purpose is to provide information and guidance on laws, regulations, and policies affecting the retirees and their family members or survivors in Europe, Africa and the Middle East.

COMMANDER AND EDITORIAL STAFF:

General B. B. BELL

Commanding General, United States Army, Europe, and Seventh Army

Colonel Jon E. Finke

Commander, 1st Personnel Command

Robert W. McEntire

USAREUR Retirement Services Officer/Editor

FOR THE COMMANDER:



GLEN L. SNOW

Director, Personnel Services
Support

Dear Retirees, Family Members, and Survivors:

You are cordially invited to attend ^{the} Twenty Fourth Annual Retiree Appreciation Day (RAD) on 11 September 2004 at the Village Pavilion, Patrick Henry Village, Heidelberg, Germany. This annual event is our expression of sincere appreciation for the military service you have rendered to the United States Army and your country. This year's program is being planned with you in mind, and we sincerely urge you to attend. Please return the questionnaire located in the back of this bulletin so that we can gauge the most relevant services as they relate to you. I look forward to seeing you on 11 September.

Sincerely,



BOB MCENTIRE
USAREUR RSO



“I must study politics and war that my sons may have liberty to study mathematics and philosophy.”

~ John Adams

Change in Law Affecting VA Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) (Suspense: NLT 15 Dec 04)

On December 16, 2003, the President signed Public Law 108-183, the Veterans Benefits Act of 2003. The new law restores DIC entitlement for certain remarried surviving spouses, including entitlements to related home loan guaranty and education benefits. Previously, entitlement to these benefits was forfeited upon remarriage, and could be restored only if the remarriage ended in death, divorce or annulment. The new law allows continuation of DIC and related benefits for surviving spouses who remarry on or after age 57. *However*, surviving spouses who remarried on or after age 57 *but before* enactment of the law (December 16, 2003), must apply within one year of enactment of the law in order to have DIC restored. Therefore, VA must receive the application no later than December 15, 2004. Application received after this date denied must deny restoration of DIC. In March, 1700 widow/widowers who had previously been terminated were notified of this change. Another 275 people enrolled in Civilian Health and Medical Program for the Department of Veterans Affairs (CHAMPVA) but are NOT in receipt for VA DIC will be notified by VA. (Source: Dept of VA memo 216B).

TRICARE for Life & Medicare Part B (Suspense 31 Dec 04)

One of the provisions of the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement and Modernization Act of 2003 allows uniformed services beneficiaries who would be eligible for TRICARE for Life (TFL), but are not enrolled in Medicare Part B, to enroll without penalty during an open enrollment period that ends Dec. 31, 2004.

An open enrollment letter will be sent to those Medicare-eligible beneficiaries who don't have Medicare Part B. As this issue went to press, the letter had not been sent. TRICARE Management Activity (TMA) is working with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and the Social Security Administration (SSA) to send uniformed services beneficiaries' information on Medicare Part B open enrollment. Eligible beneficiaries will not be required to take any action; there will be an automatic enrollment by mail. Upon receipt of the enrollment letter from SSA, Medicare-eligible beneficiaries will have the opportunity to choose any month in 2004 for their Medicare Part B enrollment. They also will be given the option to refuse Medicare Part B, or if they currently have other health insurance, they will have the option to wait until a special enrollment period to enroll.

The Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement and Modernization Act of 2003 also include a

provision for beneficiaries who enrolled in Medicare Part B between January 2001 and December 2004 and are subject to a penalty for late enrollment. Beginning January 2004, these beneficiaries have the penalty waived. They will not receive a refund for the penalties they have already paid. Beneficiaries who enrolled in Medicare Part B in 2004 and have paid a premium surcharge, will be eligible for a rebate. It has not determined how the rebate will be paid.

TMA is working with CMS and SSA to send a mailing to those who enrolled in Medicare Part B between January 2001 and December 2004 to notify them of the penalty waiver. As this issue went to press, the mailing had not occurred.

Eligible personnel include: Medicare-eligible uniformed service retirees; Eligible qualified family members and survivors; certain former spouses if they were eligible for TRICARE before age 65, have not remarried and do not have employer-sponsored other health insurance; and dual-eligible beneficiaries under age 65 who are entitled to Medicare Part A because of a disability or end-stage renal disease. (Source: <http://www.medicare.gov>.)

Contacting Retired and Annuitant Pay Center

When calling the Retired and Annuity Pay Contact Center, customers should have pencil and paper handy to write down information provided by the customer service representative. Customers should be prepared to provide their Social Security Number or spouse's Social Security Number in the case of Annuitants. To contact Retired and Annuity Pay Operations call 1-800-321-1080. Business hours are 7 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. Eastern Standard Time Monday through Friday. Mondays and paydays (first day of the month) are typically the busiest days of the week and month. Peak hours are between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. EST. Retiree and Annuitants can also email pay inquiries at <http://www.dfas.mil/s-retired/ret-pay.htm>. Simply fill out the required data fields and click submit at the bottom of the page. All email inquiries are answered in five to seven business days. Fax number is 1-800-469-6559. (Source: DFAS Military Retired Pay Newsletter.) Documents faxed to DFAS need to have the SSN on every page. DFAS has found that the method in which documents are faxed are then bundled when put in the system. These bundles are not always separated by cases and breaks in the packets can occur separating a case from the document depicting the SSN. (Source: DA RSO Note: 2004-10.)

Assistance with Social Security and VA Benefits

The Federal Benefits Unit, located at the American Consulate General, Siesmayerstrasse 21, 60323 Frankfurt Am Main, is available to assist with filing for Social Security benefits, Veterans benefits and Medicare enrollment. The hours of operation for the public are mornings from 9:00 to 12:00, Monday - Friday. You can contact the personnel in Frankfurt during those hours at (069)7535-2496. You can call for an appointment to file for benefits or if you have any questions related to the benefits that you are already receiving. If you use the internet, an excellent way to stay current on changes to Medicare is to go the www.medicare.gov website. You can also get current information about Social Security at www.socialsecurity.gov and about Veterans benefits at www.va.gov. Using these websites can help you obtain answers to any questions that you may have without the need for a telephone call or a visit to Frankfurt. (Source: Regional Federal Benefits Office, Frankfurt, Germany) The SSA has a very extensive "Frequently Asked Questions" section of its

website. It contains more than 600 questions and answers. If you cannot find one that answers your question, you can submit your own and get an e-mail response. Get an answer at, http://ssa-custhelp.ssa.gov/cgi-bin/ssa.cfg/php/enduser/std_alp.php.

Army Casualty Seeks Recalled Retirees

The Army's Casualty and Memorial Affairs Operations Center (CMAOC) is seeking qualified retired Soldiers for voluntary recall to active duty for a one-year tour of duty, with possible extension. CMAOC is the Army's policy proponent and operations center for world-wide casualty reporting and casualty notification to Soldiers' families. CMAOC oversees all aspects of providing casualty assistance and mortuary support to the families of our fallen Soldiers, to include assisting with the return of fallen Soldiers to their loved ones, ensuring coordination for funeral honors, and tracking the return of personal effects to the family. This is a sensitive mission that requires professionalism, sensitivity, good communication skills, and tact, especially when communicating with the families of Soldiers who are injured, ill, missing, or deceased. Duty locations include the Army Human Resources Command in Alexandria, VA (managing the notification process; assisting casualty assistance officers during the initial stages of their duties; etc.); the Joint Personal Effects Depot at Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD (preparing Soldiers' personal effects for a prompt and dignified return to the family); and the port mortuary at Dover, DE (preparing fallen Soldiers for their final journey home and briefing the unit escorts on their responsibilities). Government housing and dependent travel are not authorized. However, full per diem and housing allowance may be authorized depending on the location of your primary residence. The following site contains specific requirements for retiree recall: Please contact MSG (Ret) John Melville, 703-325-2897, (john.melville@hoffman.army.mil) or LTC Elaine Anzevino, 703-325-5307, (elaine.anzevino@hoffman.army.mil) if you are interested in a possible tour with Army Casualty. (Source: https://www.2xcitizen.usar.army.mil/soldierservices/mobilization/retireemob_vol.asp.)

Combat Related Special Compensation (CRSC) Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

- 1. Are all retirees with a combat-related disability eligible?** Retirees with a combat-related disability rating of 60% higher or at least 10% associated with a Purple Heart may be eligible. However, the 2004 National Defense Authorization Act also requires that retirees must have twenty or more years of active duty or 7200 reserve service points, and drawing retired pay.
- 2. Do I have to have a VA disability rating to qualify?** You may be eligible for the new compensation because you have a combat-related disability, but in order to be paid the compensation you must have an offset to your retired pay for VA disability compensation. Therefore, you must have a VA rating and be receiving disability compensation from VA in order to qualify.
- 3. How do I apply for CRSC?** The DD Form 2860 is the mechanism to relate your combat experience to the combat related disability being claimed.
- 4. What documentation will I need?** Include any documentation that you feel is relevant including all your DD 214s; relevant pages in your VA or service medical record; original and

final VA rating determinations; Purple Heart decorations and award citations. The DoD guidance does not provide an exhaustive list of relevant documentation, but instead states that decisions will be made on the preponderance of available documentary information and that quality of information is more important than quantity. Be sure to send copies not original documents. Original documents will not be returned.

5. What if I don't have the required documentation? Contact the Department of Veteran Affairs for your VA disability documentation. To contact the VA Regional Office call: 1-800-827-1000. The applicant is responsible for obtaining records of the combat-related disability.

6. How will I be paid? CRSC will be deposited to the same account where you receive your retired pay. In the event your VA disability compensation offset exceeds your retired pay it will be deposited to the account where you receive your VA payment.

7. Will the pay be retroactive? Yes. The pay will be retroactive to the date you became eligible for CRSC (either June 1, 2003, or the date of award of your qualifying VA disability determination, whichever is later). For example, if you apply in June, but your application does not get approved until September, your first payment will include a lump sum for June, July, August, and September.

8. How much do I get? There are quite a few variables that will affect your actual entitlement. The amount of payment will depend mostly on your combined disability rating, but in general terms the CRSC is a Full-Concurrent Receipt. This means that you normally will receive your full military retirement pay in addition to the VA disability percentage.

9. Is the compensation taxable? Based on current law regarding taxability of disability income, CRSC is not taxable.

10. When I submit my application should I include my most recent VA Rating Decision? Yes. The most recent VA Rating Decision is helpful to properly process your application. Also, include your initial VA Rating Decision along with copies of all Rating Decisions in your possession. When submitting copies do not leave out pages of the decisions even though they may seem trivial or extraneous. Include copies of all pages of each VA Rating Decision submitted. Contact your VA Regional Office at 1-800-827-1000 for assistance in obtaining these documents.

11. Are Purple Heart Certificates and Purple Heart Orders helpful in establishing combat-related eligibility? Yes & No. Although Purple Heart Certificates and Orders indicate a wound received in combat, they do not provide all the details necessary to establish a combat relationship for CRSC. Copies of VA Rating Decisions, medical records, and military hospital or clinical records that clearly indicate the location of the wound and date and time of incident in addition to the Purple Heart Certificate or Orders are helpful in proving a combat relationship.

12. I receive 80% compensation from the Veterans Administration but when I received my CRSC approval letter I only was only judged to be at 40%. Why? Combat-Related Special Compensation is only awarded under special circumstances. In order to receive special compensation your disabilities must conform to one or more of four categories established by law. These four categories are: Armed Conflict, Hazardous Service, Instrumentality of War and Conditions Simulating War. If your other disabilities were not

judged to match the criteria established by law in one or more of these four categories then your total CRSC compensation would be less than the amount you currently receive from the VA. (Source: www.crsc.army.mil.)

Concurrent Retired Disability Pay (CRDP) Information

This restoration of retired pay is known as Concurrent Disability Pay (CDP). It is applicable to all retirees who have a VA-rated, service-connected disability of 50% or higher with the exception of disability retirees with less than 20 years of service and retirees who have combined their military time and civil service time to qualify for a civil service retirement. The phased-in restoration will began January 1, 2004 with the first payments arriving February 2, 2004. CDP will be direct deposited or mailed based on retirees' current retired pay and VA system information. The rates will automatically increase or decrease based on the percentage of disability reported by the VA:

- If rated at 100%, \$750.00
- If rated at 90%, \$500.00
- If rated at 80%, \$350.00
- If rated at 70%, \$250.00
- If rated at 60%, \$125.00
- If rated at 50%, \$100.00

These amounts will increase each year until January of 2014 when eligible members will receive their full retired pay entitlement and their VA disability compensation with no reduction. Retirees do not have to apply to receive CRDP. It is established automatically and will be mailed or sent direct deposit based on the information on the retired pay system. All eligible retirees will receive a letter confirming their eligibility for CRDP payments. CRDP is treated as a restoration of retired pay and is taxable. Retirees eligible for Combat-Related Special Compensation (CRSC) and CRDP cannot receive both. DFAS is currently paying the retiree whichever benefit has the higher dollar entitlement. (Source: <http://www.dfas.mil>.)

ARMY KNOWLEDGE ON-LINE (AKO)

A "random thought while running" has led to more than 800,000 soldiers and Army civilians getting "www.us.army.mil" portable email accounts and access to a host of Army web-based information. That random thought belonged to now-retired GEN Dennis Reimer, to the G-6 Chief Technology Office at Fort Belvoir, Va. – home of Army Knowledge On-line. "What we needed was something to supplement the regular information channels during this period of enormous and fast-paced change," Reimer said.

In 1999, the Army established the Army Portal, also known as Army Knowledge On-line, as a one-stop-shopping site for Army information. Building on Reimer's work, in August 2001 his successor, GEN Eric Shinseki, and Army Secretary Thomas White mandated all Army (active, Guard, Reserve and Department of the Army civilians) personnel to obtain unique email accounts through the portal's address: "www.us.army.mil." These accounts stay the same no matter where soldiers and civilians are stationed worldwide.

Today, the AKO "tool set" is recognized among the military services – and around the world

in applying knowledge management concepts and technologies to the enterprise level of the Army. InfoWorld recognized the AKO portal as 10th in the nation (out of 100 organizations) in November 2001 for its innovative performance in using cutting-edge technologies to improve mission performance. And in December 2001, CIO Magazine selected AKO as one of the top 50 websites based on "...usefulness, ease of navigation, business value, survival prospects, design and credible content." (Source: Fort Belvoir Army News Service.) This vast resource is also available to retirees. To register for an AKO account, go to www.us.army.mil.

Thanks from your Army in Europe (AinE) Retiree Council

The AinE Retiree Council would like to thank all who participated in the mini-survey administered last autumn. Approximately 200 surveys were completed. While many were filled out by people attending the Heidelberg RAD, a large number were also done at the 80th ASG RAD in Belgium, the 22d ASG in Italy and by the retiree community in Wiesbaden. We had a good cross section of responses - retirees, surviving spouses - with good geographical representation.

We have confirmed that there is a significant problem here in Europe receiving the Department of the Army Retiree Bulletin, "Echoes". This bulletin provides a lot of time-sensitive information and should be received by each retiree/annuitant. We have surfaced this issue with the DA RSO. We also found that the majority of retirees and annuitants in Europe have internet access and an increasingly large number have AKO accounts. AKO accounts are discussed in this issue and the previous issue of the USAREUR Bulletin. If you need assistance with an AKO account please advise us through your local AinE Retiree Council Representative.

We also were happy to reinforce the fact that many of you are in fact "still serving" because of many hours of volunteer work you are doing for your communities. Again, thank you for taking the time to complete the survey and helping us to stay abreast of retiree issues within the European theater (Source: AinE Retiree Council).

Retirement Services Officer

ANSBACH

Commander, 235th BSB
ATTN: AETV-WG-AE (RSO)
CMR 463
APO AE 09177-0463
Tel. 0981-183-730

BAMBERG

Commander, 279th BSB
ATTN: RSO
Unit 27535
APO AE 09139-7535
Tel. 0951-300-7966

BAUMHOLDER

Commander, 222nd BSB
ATTN: RSO
Unit 23746
APO AE 09034-3746
Tel. 06783-6-6150

DARMSTADT

Commander, 233rd BSB
ATTN: AEUSG-DA-RSO
Unit 29500 Box 0001
APO AE 09175-0431
Tel. 06151-69-0001

GIESSEN

Commander, 284th BSB
ATTN: RSO
Unit 20911-0284
APO AE 09169
Tel. 0641-402-1770

GRAFENWOEHR

Commander, 100th ASG
ATTN: S1 (RSO)
Unit 28130
APO AE 09114-8130
Tel. 09641-83-7140

HANAU

Commander, 104th ASG
ATTN: RSO
APO AE 09165-0104
Tel. 06181-88-9001

HANAU

Commander, 414th BSB
Unit 20193 Box 34
APO AE 09165-0034
Tel. 06181-88-1770

HEIDELBERG

Commander, 26th ASG
ATTN: S-1 (RSO)
APO AE 09102-0026
Tel. 06221-17-6857

HEIDELBERG

Commander, 411th BSB
ATTN: RSO
Unit 29245
APO AE 09102-9245
Tel. 06221-57-6711

KAISERSLAUTERN

Commander, 415th BSB
ATTN: RSO
APO AE 09227-0415
Tel. 0631-411-7333

KITZINGEN

Commander, 417th BSB
ATTN: RSO
APO AE 09031-0417
Tel. 09321-305-8372

MANNHEIM

Commander, 293rd BSB
ATTN: RSO
APO AE 09086-0293
Tel. 0621-730-2086

SCHWEINFURT

Commander, 280th BSB
ATTN: RSO
CMR 457
APO AE 09033-0457
Tel. 09721-96-1550

STUTTGART

Commander, 6th ASG
ATTN: CPF/RSO
APO AE 09107-0006
Tel. 0711-680-4064

WIESBADEN

Commander, 221st BSB
Unit 29623
ATTN: RSO
APO AE 09096-9623
Tel. 0611-705-1670

WUERZBURG

Commander, 98th ASG
ATTN: G1 (RSO)
CMR 476
APO AE 09036-0476
Tel. 0931-296-4426

SHAPE, BELGIUM

Commander, 80th ASG
Unit 21420 Box 5100
ATTN: RSO
APO AE 09705-5100
Tel. 0032-65-44-4575

SHINNEN, NETHERLANDS

HQ 254th BSB
ATTN: AERAN-AJ (RSO)
CMR 461
APO AE 09703-0461
Tel. 0031-46-443-7320

ITALY/AFRICA/MID-EAST

Tel. 0039-0444-51-7262

USAREUR RSO

HQ, 1st PERSCOM
ATTN: AEUPE-PSSD-RSO
Unit 29058
APO AE 09081-9058
Tel. 06202-80-6080

E-mail Addresses:

80th ASG, Shape, Belgium: RSOBelgium@usanato.army.mil
254th BSB, Schinnen, Netherlands: rso254bsb@254bsb.schinnen.army.mil
280th BSB, Schweinfurt, Germany: RSO.Schweinfurt@cmtymail.98asg.army.mil
USAREUR RSO, Schwetzingen, Germany: usareur-rso@hq.1perscom.army.mil

**USAREUR RETIREE APPRECIATION DAY
ATTENDANCE QUESTIONNAIRE**

PRIVACY ACT OF 1974: Section 3012, title 10, United States Code.

PURPOSE: To provide planning information for the USAREUR Retiree Appreciation Day, September 11, 2004.

USE: Retirement Services Office, 1st PERSCOM.

DISCLOSURE is voluntary. However, failure to provide necessary information may preclude receipt of services.

NAME: _____ RETIRED RANK: _____
(Print Last, First, MI)

NAME AND RELATIONSHIP OF OTHER INDIVIDUALS WHO WILL BE
ACCOMPANYING YOU. (i.e., Wife, Son, Friend):

1. _____ 3. _____

2. _____ 4. _____

REQUEST YOU CIRCLE THE FOLLOWING SERVICES YOU WOULD USE IF AVAILABLE:

**Glaucoma Test / Eye Test / Blood Pressure / Dental Examination /
Nutrition Guide**

Do you need to replace an ID card?*

a. Self:

Yes ___ No ___

b. Family Member:

Yes ___ No ___

Do you desire any Legal Services?

Yes ___ No ___

Do you need a wheelchair?

Yes ___ No ___

NOTE: Documents required for issuance of Identification Card(s).

Retiree: DD Form 214 or Retirement Orders

Spouse/Dependent Children: Retirement Orders, Marriage Certificate, and Birth Certificate

Survivor: Retirement Orders, Marriage Certificate and Death Certificate

RETURN THIS FORM NO LATER THAN 15 AUGUST 2004.

Mail to APO or economy address:

**Commander, 1st PERSCOM
ATTN: AEUPE-PSSD-PAD-RSO
Unit 29058
APO AE 09081-9058**

**Commander, 1st PERSCOM
ATTN: AEUPE-PSSD-PAD-RSO
Friedrichsfelder Str.
Kilbourne Kaserne
68723 Schwetzingen**

(FOLD HERE)

FROM: _____

TO: _____

(FOLD HERE)

STAPLE HERE